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America and the Chinese, September, 1905

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BY

HUNTINGTON WILSON, SECRETARY OF LEGATION OF THE

UNITED STATES AT TOKIO.

Sept 1905

It has been a distressing sight to see the current of kindly feeling which has so long flowed across the Pacific Ocean between the myriad Chinese nation and their nearest Western neighbors disturbed for a time by the recent anti-American agitation and boycott of American goods by the Chinese. Americans were surprised at the phenomenon and vaguely felt that there must be some mistake, that this thing had come upon them while they slept.

Our expressed purpose had been rigidly to limit and, later, to exclude Chinese labor immigration, but always to admit Chinese officials, scholars, and merchants. The Chinese Government had practically acquiesced in this arrangement, without any great signs of dissatisfaction. If we had done precisely this no noticeable objection would have been ^{*expressed*} ~~felt~~ in China. What we have done in addition to the exclusion of Chinese "coolies" is the cause of the anti-American boycott.

Most people were not very familiar with the treaty and legislative control of Chinese immigration to this country

and

and the actual conditions to which it had given rise. Investigation now shows us that we have unwittingly brought upon ourselves this storm of Chinese protest by treating Chinese immigration in a way which no American interest demands. It is not inaccurate to say that the whole thing has been a mistake.

Let us look at the conditions of Chinese immigration. Before embarking for the United States a Chinese of the admitted class is required to obtain an elaborate certificate from his Government, or, if resident outside China, from the Government of the country of his residence. This certificate must then be viséd by an American diplomatic or consular officer. Moreover, his arrival at a port in the United States seems to have been surrounded with unnecessarily vexatious circumstances.

It is interesting to notice that the interpretation of the law which requires a certificate from the Government under which he resides, in the case of a Chinese intending to go to the United States, has an unexpected effect in some cases. In Japan, for example, this interpretation imposes upon all Chinese residents, including officials, scholars, and merchants, to whom the right of admission is conceded, an effective exclusion, because the local authorities find it impossible to issue the certificate which alone will suffice at an American port

of entry.

This condition of absolute inability to travel to the United States has brought about a peculiar anti-American sentiment among the prosperous Chinese merchants resident in the Japanese Empire. They have held indignation meetings in the principal sea-ports and have passed resolutions to boycott American goods and also to taboo American transportation lines. To illustrate the intensity of the feeling, an instance may be cited of a well-to-do Chinese merchant of Yokohama who dashed his American watch on the floor, declaring to the gathering of his compatriots that he would never again own anything American.

America has had a considerable influence upon China, through her early prominence in the China trade in the good old days of the sailing ships, when the American clipper "Witch of the Wave" made the record run of ninety days from Wampoa to Dungeness, and ships used to race to fix the price of tea in Europe and America. In those days several of the greatest trading houses in China were American.

Her influence has also been spread by the missionaries. Indeed, American missionaries and their schools in China have taught the Chinese much of the very sense of justice,

spirit, and organization which have enabled them now to force the American people to examine their treatment of their Mongol brothers across the Pacific.

The mistake we have made will doubtless soon be set right by treaty and ^{by} legislation. This can easily be done by a broad-minded circumspection and by the avoidance of harshness in the administration of our laws. But we Americans have lost something, inadvertently and undeservedly, in the esteem and confidence of the Chinese nation. The practical effect would naturally be a decline in our influence and a set-back to our trade. We owe ourselves vindication in the eyes of the Chinese. To this our statesmen and legislators will attend. The honest and benevolent intentions of our whole policy towards China entitle us to the highest place among her friendships. Our geographical position and our production entitle us to the highest place in her trade returns.

Similarly to ourselves, the Japanese, through proximity, may expect a large share of China's trade. Their trade with China already amounts (1904) to 88,150,914 Haikwan taels, as compared to Great Britain's 72,490,918, and America's 56,268,921. Besides, many Japanese enterprises in

the fluctuations in the value of silver, and down to 62 cents, approximately. About 59 cents would be a fair average basis of calculation today.

war. ★

All the early stages of the immemorial civilization of Japan were developed under Chinese tutelage. Today the awakening China is turning to Japan to repay her learning in the modern coin. There are now about five thousand Chinese students in the Japanese schools, bent on Western learning.

This contact will foster a sympathy between the two peoples. These large numbers of *Chinese* educated in Japan will, when they return to China, spread Japanese influence and disseminate Japanese ideas. The political and trade relations between China and Japan will profit accordingly.

Up to the present the Japanese Government has been passive in the matter, affording no particular facilities. The Chinese Government, at its own expense, has sent two thousand students to Japan, and defrays the expenses of their education. This costs from 400 to 450 yen (1 yen equals 50 cents in American money) per year for each student, including tuition, board, lodging

★ The Haikwan tael is the unit in which the Chinese customs duties are calculated. Its equivalent in gold varies with the fluctuations in the value of silver in China. In recent years it has been above 70 cents, American money, and down to 62 cents, approximately. About 69 cents would be a fair average basis of calculation today.

To be printed as a foot-note

American

schools 25 yen per month for each student, and the school returns the student 3 yen for pocket money, leaving 22 yen, of which 4 yen is the tuition fee.

The remaining three thousand students pay their own expenses. The students mostly attend middle schools (corresponding in grade to our ^{grammar} ~~public~~ schools). Several hundred attend schools with curriculums especially designed to prepare for the Government military school for officers. A number also attend a school with an academic department where instruction is given in economics and other more advanced subjects.

The Chinese Minister in Tokio is Superintendent-General of the students, and the Peking Government has in addition designated a special official to reside in Tokio as Superintendent to care for and exercise a certain supervision over the students. The Chinese Legation disburses certain small sums of money as extras for vacation expenses, for medical attendance, and for such occasional needs.

The number of Chinese students in Japan is being augmented by every steamer. Their number is becoming formidable. It is superfluous further to emphasize the importance of this as an influential factor in the development of their relations between China and Japan.

Philanthropists who engaged in this work might feel

American influence and American trade in the Far East would greatly benefit if the American and Chinese nations could be brought into closer touch and more intimate mutual knowledge by an extension of the brotherhood of education.

Next to Japan we are the nearest geographically, and we are in a position to teach China the modern sciences, the arts, and the spirit of progress which she is now beginning to value.

Of course the high prices and high cost of living prevalent in the United States would act as a deterrent, and some encouragement will be necessary. But our educational institutions are overwhelmed with donations, and what better use could American millionaire philanthropists make of their money than to establish funds at certain carefully selected schools for the education of Chinese students? A number of the best preparatory schools could be endowed with funds for the education of fifty or a hundred Chinese students each, and some university scholarships for Chinese could be maintained, carrying the lines of the brotherhood of scholarship beyond the Anglo-Saxon bounds of the Cecil Rhodes scholarships, beyond the lines of the Caucassian race, to the wide limits of the brotherhood of mankind.

Philanthropists who engaged in this work might feel

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that they were contributing directly to the spread of Christian civilization. They might also feel that they were casting their bread upon the waters whence it surely returns.

Yokio, Sept 2, 1905